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THE MIGHTY AND THE LOWLY

KATRINA TRASK

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TORONTO

THE MIGHTY AND THE LOWLY

BY

KATRINA TRASK

AUTHOR OF "IN THE VANGUARD," ETC.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1915

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Set up and electrotyped. Published August, 1915.
Reprinted December, 1915.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

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ACROSS the chasm of the centuries, through the dark mists of history, there shines a radiant figure; He stands majestic, beautiful, serene, convincing in His fearless truth-telling, resplendent in His virile purity.

Behold Jesus!
Called by some, the son of Joseph the Carpenter,
Called by some, the son of David the King,
Called by some, the Son of God.

Over His love-compelling face, the dogmatic Church has woven a sacerdotal veil, bossed with jewels, overlaid with

mystic symbols, and broidered with many-coloured threads — green for Advent, purple for passion, black for Golgotha, and spotless white for Easter day.

Between the eyes of those who look to Him and His all-seeing eyes of Truth, men have erected high embattled walls of their own building, ornamented and elaborately carved with the manifold devices and interpretations of men.

Between His outstretched hands of fellowship to all mankind and our seeking hands, rolls an unplumbed sea of blood — blood that has been shed in His name by those who have taken His name in vain to prove a point in argument.

Between His Word and our eager listening ear, men have made an age-long wrangling buzz, so confusing that His simple divine message comes to our

mind interrupted by the noisy jar of disputants.

But all the boundless barriers made by men cannot hide Him from those who look to Him with seeing eyes.

He is an unquenched and an unquenchable Light.

In His hand He holds the key to an unseen kingdom of the soul. And, speaking as one having authority, He utters immortal words.

Even if one does not accept the doctrine of the Incarnation in a strict theological sense, at least one must admit that the Word of Jesus is the most inspired, the most exalted, of all words ever spoken by any teacher, any master of men or founder of a religion, since the world began. Apart from classification of it, or exact belief concerning its verbal inspiration, the Word of Jesus is the most

convincing of all the inspired Books the world has ever known. It bears the *internal* evidence of Truth and divine wisdom: of inspiration and revelation.

Jesus spake as never man spake. His philosophy is universal, all-rounded: it goes to the very depth of life and human experience, it goes to the utmost height of aspiration and human possibility. His Word bears upon its wide-spread, upward-soaring wings the hope, the promise, the reality of Life.

But that Word must be taken *as a whole!* Any part of it wrested away from its context, given without its just balance, and presented as the *whole* truth is a black lie — for "a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies."

The Word of Jesus is a sublime proportion: it is a balance of extremes:

in it is even the vital strength of contradiction, the vigorous truth of paradox. And in its philosophy lies the summation of all conceptions of life. For Jesus knew them all — He considered every side and comprehended every phase of the human heart.

In His Word are all things for all men!

Is one a poet? — For that soul there is wondrous music. Is one a practical man of affairs? — There is common-sense handling of the detail of life and work — even to the story of the talents. Is one a mystic? — There is the hidden covert for the soul. Is one a realist? — There is the tonic from clear, free and fearless speech. Is one a man of the world? — There is the thrill of delight in penetrating wit — keen, clever, sharp as a Damascus blade — the incomparable catching and cornering of the wily law-

yers. Is one a logician? — There is the strength and stimulus of matchless logic. Is one a philosopher? — There is the inspiration of a new philosophy. Is any man athirst? — He will find therein the Water of Life.

Every true way the heart of man can reach, every righteous thing the soul of man desires, the Word of Jesus meets it and responds.

And yet — woe, woe, woe to the blindness and folly of men! There is no one in history who has ever been more cruelly, more wantonly misunderstood! No teacher has ever been more falsely interpreted, more falsely quoted; quoted with half quotations which throw the truth asserted out of balance, and give the meaning a false perspective.

Fragments of His wondrous Word, torn from the context to suit the narrow

minds of narrow men according to the narrowness of their man-made dogma, have been presented as the warrant of one class, one sect after another, as widely different each from each as are the warring minds of men.

Each sect has taken some unbalanced portion of His Gospel, has translated or interpreted it according to its own concept, and used it as a corner-stone in the temple of its own building; each sect has also made its concept, its interpretation of the Master according to the pattern of the sect, and has formed a different word-picture of Jesus for its followers — painting it in different lines and colours, and in different lights, according to the mind of the individual who spoke as the exponent of his sect.

And all these pictures are so far apart, even in barest outline, that no man,

contemplating them, can imagine they were intended for the same original.

The Catholic Church has taken the warm tide of humanity from His veins and enshrined Him in a sacred, guarded tabernacle too high for men to reach; all-powerful, She has kept the multitude kneeling upon the pavement at His feet, whilst the commanding cry of sacerdotal priests has echoed through the vaulted aisles of beauty-stored cathedrals: "Behold Jesus, the very God of very God — this, and this alone, is He!"

The protesting sects have pulled Him out of the shrine, smashing it in violent bitterness of hatred: they have overflushed Him with lusty blood, made Him hail-fellow walking amongst men, and they have brought Him into intimate hobnobbery with the multitude:

their familiar call has rung through the colourless, bare Meeting-House: "Behold Jesus, the Friend of man — this, and this alone, is He!"

In the avowed cause of Jesus, men have been led to massacre, to wars, to persistent persecution. His name has been too often the battle-cry to lead men on to cruelty and slaughter. Some words of His have been too often wrested from their context to serve as warrant for crimes, misnamed Christianity, and for persecution, misnamed duty.

His name has been too often used as an endorsement by which men have justified their passions, their selfishness and their cruelty. Men's consciences assert that fierce and cruel passions must be subdued; but when they claim a religious motive they justify to their conscience

their sin and call it by the name of virtue, and, with the warrant of the Church, allow their cruelty to take its course.

In the name of Jesus, men have lighted the fires at the stake, turned the thumb-screw and applied the rack.

In the name of Jesus, men have sharpened the axe to punish those who before had lighted the fires at the stake.

The Church Catholic, the Church Protestant, the Church Reformed, have each in turn been responsible for the shedding of blood, the doing of deeds unspeakable, in His name.

And now, to-day, in this tense and pregnant age, there has arisen a zealous band of strenuous workers in a New Order, who proclaim Jesus as their Captain and use His name as their battle-cry, His standard as their guidon in the fight.

This New Order, with virile insistence, flaunts the blood-red flag to words of His, and madly marches forward in the name of Jesus, obsessed with the wild desire and fierce determination to find in Him a warrant for the propaganda they proclaim.

"Out upon all former concepts of Jesus," they shout in field and market-place. "Down with the Church! Down with the rich! Down with the privileged class! Jesus denounced the mighty and the rich, He condemned the privileged class, He exalted the poor: He was a Carpenter, a Workingman, His mission was to be a Leader of the proletariat: His Gospel was a social gospel."

All Hail to the New Order! All Hail to the earnest workers in the social revolution!

They have their reason and their rights! The world sadly needs a New Order, the world demands a social regeneration.

But in so far as they bring Jesus into the social warfare of the times, in so far as they make Him the Captain of their campaign, and in so far as they wrest the words of Jesus from their context to support that campaign, they take His name in vain.

Disproportionate riches are a barrier to the development of the ultimate social good: a privileged class manifestly retards the coming of an ideal state of society. But riches *exist*, they have existed since the world began; and men are now born into different spheres to meet very different problems; without volition they find themselves the sons

and daughters of the poor, bearing sad burdens, or of the privileged class, bearing the measureless responsibilities thereby entailed. The poor and the rich in different ways are both the victims of evil conditions, the result of the errors of the centuries. These divisions and marked differentiations have gone on since the dawn of the history of mankind: it is a vast, a difficult problem — the solution of which must be intellectually, conscientiously and carefully worked out. Some day all will be changed — there will be a more sane and just balance of conditions: our utmost practical and political energy and influence must be put into the work of changing the conditions: but the longer they have existed, the more knotted, snarled, difficult and gigantic the problem, the more time and brains we must put into its solution.

All honour to the social workers who have set themselves to find a solution, to work out the hideous, age-long problem; all honour to those who strive to bring about improved conditions.

But they go the wrong way about a righteous task when they exploit the name of Jesus in their campaign! When they stir up strife with words of His and draw false pictures to use as propaganda in their zeal.

No single part of the Word of Jesus should be used or urged as propaganda or programme for any church, for any society, or as a platform for any campaign — least of all as a programme or platform of social change.

The Gospel of Jesus cannot be separated. Therein lies its incomparable beauty, its majestic power, its convincing truth.

The Word of Jesus is an everlasting denial of all exclusive claims: whether of church or state, sect or faction, caste or class, dogma or denomination, party or organisation.

It is the cosmic universality of the Spirit of Jesus that makes Him forever the great sympathiser, the great interpreter, of the hearts of *all* men.

The entire Gospel of Jesus is for all and to all: its message may come to all through all: through the Church, for those who need the outward symbol — through the Meeting-House, for those who demand more freedom — and through the New Order of a larger Brotherhood, for those to whom social reforms are the salvation of mankind.

Let each class, each sect, each faction, fulfil its mission: let each church, each

fraternity, each social order, preach the message of Jesus in its own way, and the heart that responds to that way will be helped thereby.

But woe, woe, unto that class, sect or faction which cries — "The truth is here — the truth is there!" Woe, woe, to everyone who says — "This is the *only* way; the kingdom of God cometh by *this* way, and *by this way alone!*"

To say that is a supreme denial of the very Word of Jesus. Hearken to His Word —

"The kingdom of God cometh *not with observation:* Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!"

Jesus urged no doctrine, He taught no rigid creeds, He marked no lines, He formed no forms, He advocated no

propaganda, He founded no institutions, He emphasized no social order.

He flaunted neither the royal purple standard of the king, the tricolour of the republic, nor the flaming red flag of the proletariat. He wore neither the cope nor the chasuble, the mitre nor the crown, the white linen lawn nor the plain black gown, the monk's hood nor the blood-red shirt.

Creeds, dogmas, institutions, canons, constitutions, articles and forms, societies, fraternities and social orders — *as such* — were no more to Him than the broad phylacteries of the Pharisees, nor than the washing of the platters and the cups.

He knew all, understood all, sympathised with all, accepted the sincere desire in all — but He *commanded* none!

Modern agitators proclaim a New Order, a new Christianity, a social religion. They have tuned their note to match this day of discontent: their cry, which encircles the world, is an insistent protest upon one theme: they, also, would make of Jesus — the myriad-minded Philosopher, the cosmic, universal Teacher — a Specialist, close-limited to a narrow groove; a broader groove than the old one, possibly, but still a groove: and they would make of His Gospel a brief for their own Cause.

With loud assurance do they cry — "The Gospel of Jesus is altogether a social gospel! Go to, you rich men, weep, weep and howl! Your day is done — you have kept Jesus enshrined in ecclesiastical remoteness, you have used His banner to cover discontent. In His name you have levied taxes for

the church and for the princes of the church. You have used His words as a salve to keep men quiet in their squalor, their poverty and their misery. Out upon you! You have no part in Him! He belongs to us! He was against the privileged class and against the rich. He was born in a lowly stable; He was of the poor and He came to the poor. No more will we tolerate a remote, exclusive Jesus."

What if there is justice in that protesting cry? What if it be true that the Church has too long kept Jesus remote from men, too long forgotten the Brotherhood of man? What if the privileged class has too often used the name of Jesus to hush the cry of the hungry and the destitute? What if it be true that the Church has been too often used for selfish purposes by the privileged class

— if it has held the banner emblazoned with the name of Jesus in the march against discontent, and held the Cross — the symbol of His sacrifice — as the sign in the militant protest to silence the eager questions of men?

What if all this *be* true?

Shall evil be met with evil? Can lies drive out lies? Must the advocates of the New Order do the very thing that they decry in the Old Order? Shall the methods they denounce be used against the men whom they denounce?

Is the new cry of the proletariat — the new method of the proletariat, any nearer to the truth than the old cry — the old method of the privileged class, or of the churchly hierarchy?

Two classes exist, alas! The rich and the poor, the mighty and the lowly, the patricians and the plebeians, the pro-

letariat and the aristocracy. There is injustice in the very phraseology of class distinctions, there is a sense of social immorality in the use and acceptance of such nomenclature: but since time began these two classes — called by different names in different countries and in different ages — have stood marked in history, and the differentiation must be acknowledged, the fact must be admitted. It is an age-long problem — tragic, staggering, titanic, repeating itself in every century after every apparent readjustment.

This problem will be, it *must* be, worked out to an ultimate adjustment — it is the inevitable result of evolution: but, pending that adjustment, which will, one day, be worked out, let the apostles of the New Order beware that they do not follow the error they so

violently denounce in the Old Order: for in so doing they will go from evil unto evil, and will retard the coming of the better day.

The apostles of the new social order should be as strict to avoid the concept of an *exclusive* Jesus as they are drastic in their denunciation of society and the church for having held, heretofore, a concept of an exclusive Jesus.

This latter-day Order, excluding all who differ from its formula and its concept — notwithstanding its proclamation of democracy, brotherhood and social Christianity — is no less exclusive really than the former concepts which are so justly to be denounced.

If Jesus has, heretofore, been kept remote from the proletariat, shall He now be kept remote from the aristocracy? Should He be enshrined for the *privileged*

class of the poor any more than for the *privileged class of the rich?*

Let the proletaires beware how they flaunt the standards of Jesus in their war upon their neighbours, and how they use His words to stir up strife.

With impatient reaction from ecclesiasticism, men are now echoing on every side the cry,

"The manhood of Jesus! The Humanity of Jesus!"

Welcome cry — too long delayed!

Jesus was Man! Whether He were incarnate God is a question not for discussion in these pages; if He were incarnate God, in His manifestation upon earth He was *very* man: in all ways He lived, loved, suffered and was tempted like unto all men. The time has come

to think more upon His manhood in its relation to mankind. Too long we have busied ourselves with hair-splitting over the exact quality of His Divinity, instead of carefully studying the reality of His Humanity: too long we have waged war over His immaculate birth, and forgotten, in the dispute, to consider fully His immaculate life: too long we have emphasised the theological dogma of His Godhood, ignoring the supreme lesson of His Manhood: the lesson which shines forth with an effulgent truth the more we ponder it — that to *every* man it is given to become a son of God.

It is well that the reality of His manhood amongst men should be avowed.

And now as men avow His manhood with firm insistence, they avow at the same time, with flamboyant eloquence, His Democracy.

"Jesus is the great Example of Democracy!" they cry, and even as they utter the cry they contradict the essential point of the democracy which they proclaim.

"He gave no favour to the rich," they insist, "no respect to the great, to the powerful, nor to the important of the world; He honoured the poor; He received the outcast."

Thanks be to God, He did honour the poor, He did receive the outcast. Let all men remember it, let no man forget it!

That is, however, only *half* the story.

Let us remember the mathematical truth of the complete circle.

Consider the Democracy of Jesus.

In the days in which He was upon earth, class distinctions were more em-

phatically marked with more degrading lines than at any time in history; the patrician class was tyrannical and despotic; the poor were trodden under foot; they had no rights — no power — no place; they were considered as insects, as despicable vermin. And yet, for some wise reason of His own, Jesus took the established order as He found it — without protest or comment. He met the victims of the age-long errors of human experiment — both the victims of the down-trodden class and the more unfortunate, misguided victims of the down-treading class — in precisely the same way; He treated them, as far as their outward circumstances were concerned, with absolute equality.

The Democracy of Jesus was universal, all-inclusive, all-embracing: it failed at no point.

It included the proletaire as well as the aristocrat — else it would not be a true democracy. But, it included the aristocrat as well as the proletaire — else it would not be a true democracy.

It included the poor as well as the rich — else it would not be a true democracy. But, it included the rich as well as the poor — else it would not be a true democracy.

Any so-called democracy that *excludes any part* of the complete circle is a broken arc.

The Democracy of Jesus was a Perfect Round.

When we read, weigh and carefully consider the narrative recorded in the New Testament, we find that whilst Jesus was as hospitable to the down-trodden class as He was to the privileged

class, He was, also, as gracious and hospitable to the privileged class as He was to the down-trodden class.

Hypocrisy, pharisaism, pride and lack of charity, He ever severely denounced — but He denounced them equally in the prince and in the pauper, in the mighty high priest and in the lowly fisherman. Faith, hope, trust and charity, He approved and received — but He approved them equally in the nobleman and in the outcast.

Through the record of the life of Jesus, and all of the ministry of Jesus, we find therein *both* sides of life accepted and received with equal impartiality, with equal simplicity, equal comprehension and equal sympathy — the life of the aristocrat and the proletaire, of the ruler and the servant, of the king and the malefactor.

The only differentiation He makes between men is a differentiation of the Spirit.

The modern agitators, with calm assurance, make statements from the records — which they claim to have discovered. They claim that the Word has been read in the dim and ghostly light of churchly candles so long that the vital points of the virile Message have been overlooked.

Granted. But have they bettered the matter in these latter days? They have merely given us another error in place of the old error. The modern Agitators — the modern Christian Socialists — are now reading that Word in the blaze and crackle of red hot bonfires to the blare and clash of sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, and though they may gain one

advantage they, in their turn, lose other advantages, more vital because more cosmic and universal.

We must take that glorious life, that divinely proportioned Word in its completeness, as a whole, when from it we would draw conclusions.

Here are the facts, as recorded in the story, concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Whatever is thought of the social problem, however true the protest that class distinctions are iniquitous, whatever the wish to draw sharp lines of exclusion against king, patrician and the privileged class, this fact remains: Jesus was of the poor — and of the rich; He was of the patrician class — and of the plebeian class; He was the son of a lowly prole-

taire — He was the descendant of mighty kings.

And ever, throughout His life, the representatives of the two classes — individuals of the patrician class and individuals of the plebeian class — were held by Him in equal consideration; with equal honour and with equal respect He spoke of His father Joseph the Carpenter, and of His father David the King.

Consider the story.

On the night in which Jesus was born, the mighty empire of Rome held dominion over the earth. The world lay at the feet of Cæsar and poured its tribute before his imperial throne; the unconquered standards — on which were marked the dauntless letters S P Q R — were planted North and South, East and West: and in that little town of

Bethlehem, in the fair pasture-land of Judæa, amongst the rolling, blue hills and the fruitful, green vineyards, the hour had come which was to bring to the world a new transcendent power.

Augustus Cæsar had sent forth a decree that all men should be taxed: there were taxes, taxes, always taxes, under the iron rule of Rome: but this especial tax was a census that the inhabitants of Judæa might be enrolled upon the Roman records: for further taxation, it is true, but also for their own protection.

From Nazareth to Bethlehem came Joseph and his wife Mary — the loveliest flower in Judæa.

Joseph was a working man, an honest toiler; his wife, a simple working woman. Mary was great with child — the hour of her accomplishment was nigh, yet she stayed not at home in the Nazarene shop

to await the coming of the censor, nor to abide her husband's return: to Bethlehem she went with her lord.

No simple journey this: the road was rough, the way was long — over the hills, through the rocky passes.

Why did a young Mother, with her unborn child lying beneath her heart, venture upon so perilous a way? It was that she and her husband might be enrolled of the royal line and lineage in the City of David, for Joseph and Mary were both descendants of the great King!

This precious family fact of their royal descent was as much a part of the daily, honest pride of the worthy Carpenter and his lovely wife as were the skill and quality of his honest handicraft.

Thus, at the advent of Jesus, King and Carpenter are merged in one! The Labourer and the Monarch!

O mighty lesson in true democracy! When the royal blood and the peasant's blood unite, when there is no hiding of the one, no vaunting of the other, no shame of the lowliness of the one, no false pride in the distinction of the other.

King and Carpenter — Carpenter and King! And no man marks a difference between them. King and Carpenter — Carpenter and King! And each mission is looked upon merely as a life-work held consecrate, to be honestly performed, no more, no less.

King and Carpenter — Carpenter and King! When men reach the true democracy, there will be no difference between them — as men. Each will be merely a working man. Each will know himself a working man and respect himself and the other man for the quality of his work.

The King — a builder, a maker, a creator. What matter whether it be an empire or a mansion which he creates! The Carpenter — a builder, a maker, a creator. What matter if it be a mansion or an empire which he creates!

The real democracy will come when the ruler who rules carelessly will be considered a poorer creature than the carpenter who builds well; and the carpenter who builds a mansion carelessly will be considered of a lower order of being than the king who builds an empire well. Then the king who builds his empire honestly and well and the carpenter who builds his mansion honestly and well will be of the same order and in the same class.

Character and not condition will be the test; quality and not circumstance will mark the differentiation. This is

the only differentiation of class that Jesus recognised.

Back of that Baby, lying beneath the heart of Mary, were Joseph and his wife with their work-worn hands, and the little shop in Nazareth where faithful toil lent dignity to life; — and back of that Baby, also, were David and Solomon, the mighty Monarchs of Israel, and the unrivalled court of royal magnificence and splendour.

And ever as we follow the golden thread of the story of Jesus of Nazareth, we find always the utmost extremes of external condition meeting, naturally, with sublime simplicity, with perfect harmony.

The long and toilsome journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem had been accomplished, the rough way had been trav-

ersed, under the austere stars by night and under the glistening Eastern sun by day. Joseph and his wife had arrived at last at Bethlehem, and Mary, the Mystic Rose of the world, was suddenly gripped by the mortal pangs of travail — that glorious agony of woman which ends at last in the supreme joy and crown of Motherhood, God's greatest gift to humankind!

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

Here is the vital illustration of a vast and mighty truth — the truth of the unimportance of all external circumstance and external condition.

Verily Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger; but *why* was He born in a stable and laid in a manger?

Who pauses in the insistent argument to read the deep heart of the story?

The advocates of externals, the apostles of the non-essential, in their desire to stress the point of His poverty, forget the supreme lesson of that birth.

As a matter of fact, Jesus was born in a stable and lay amongst the cattle, *not* because He was one of the proletariat, *not* because He was the son of a poor man — of the working class: He was born in a stable and lay amongst the cattle because of an accident, a mere chance of circumstance: He was born in a stable and laid in a manger simply because *there was no room in the inn.*

Mary and Joseph, at the end of their journey, went at once to the Inn — probably the best Inn in Bethlehem, else it would not have been crowded. This self-respecting craftsman Joseph and Mary his wife, must have had some financial resources, for they had sufficient money to take journeys to Jerusalem, and to start in haste for Egypt when it became necessary for them to go.

They must have had the wherewithal to purpose to care comfortably for the coming of the Child : they had no thought except for shelter in the Inn — for to the Inn they went straightway.

But there was no room in the Inn !

The hour of the exalted Mother was at hand, and there was not a place to lay her down in the over-crowded hostelry. Some shelter must be sought, and that at once — her travail was upon

her. The very nearest shelter where privacy could be obtained was the stable, where the cattle of the Inn were sleeping.

And thus it came about that Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger upon a bed of straw.

What if there had been room in the Inn? What if Mary had found housing there? What if Mary had brought forth her Son in the Inn as she and her husband manifestly purposed? Would Jesus then have been ever ranked — in the broad classification — with the privileged class? Would He have been any different? Would the reality of His mission have been any less? Surely, He would have been as indifferent to His advent in comfort as He ever was indifferent to His advent in the manger.

He rose above the lowly circumstance of His cradle in the straw amongst the

cattle: He neither stressed it nor mentioned it in His appeal to men: and He would have risen as certainly above the circumstance of the Inn with its comfort. He would have risen above the splendour and luxury of a palace.

Jesus was laid in a manger when He was born — because there was no room in the Inn.

Is not the great Truth suggested in that simple nativity story, the absolute unimportance of all external circumstance?

The fact is not that Jesus was born in a stable, and that, therefore, He came to the poor, was of the poor: the fact is not that He was born in comfort and the best luxury that the town could afford, and that, therefore, He was of finer mould than His brothers: — the fact

is that it made not the *slightest difference where* He was born. He transcended the stall; He would have transcended the palace.

Neither did it make the slightest difference to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, where she brought forth her Child. There was no room in the Inn: she accepted, joyously, the situation and went to the desolate stone stable. No sigh of complaint, no murmur of fret, no word of worry escaped her.

She brought forth her Son and laid Him on a bed of straw precisely as naturally as she would have laid Him in a cradle of carved cedar-wood, in a fair imperial mansion. With the blood of kings coursing in her veins, she made no demands: she took the cheerless, comfortless manger and the stony stall amidst the cattle with the same regal

poise, the same womanly sweetness with which she would have taken the cosey Inn with Roman comfort and Roman service.

Externals do not really matter to the heart that is filled with the Eternal Reality of Life.

The heart of Mary the Mother of Jesus was pondering things wonderful, sacred, exalted. What to her was the outward measure of her state — the outward form of her bed!

The one dominant thought which lingers from the careful consideration of that nativity story is the *powerlessness* of any external thing to touch the Soul alive in the reality of joy — the reality of Life!

Out of the mouth of that new-born Baby, lying upon His Mother's breast,

there is to proceed in years to come this immortal Word — "The kingdom of God is within you."

On this holy nativity night, Mary His Mother, with divine prescience, knows the truth of the Word: and all the barren place is radiant with the splendour of her soul.

Many a woman has brought forth her first-born in a stately room, lying upon a bed of eider-down, hung with curtains wrought with needle-work and threads of gold — surrounded by liveried attendants and lulled by dulcet music, and all the while her mind has been cumbered with the stupid, stuffy, material details of her luxury, with the formula of the world's conventional order for the advent of a child, with the

contemplation of the pattern and quality of her child's christening robe, and the flashing splendour of the jewels presented to her at her lying-in. And that woman has been poor with a poverty beyond all words, for she has lost the unspeakable beauty of her high estate, because her eyes have been holden — too full of the corruptible treasures of her chamber and her ante-chamber to see the Vision of the incorruptible, that fadeth not away.

Mary the Mother of Jesus lay upon a bed of straw in a Syrian stable — a cave of stone — upon the open hillside. The steadfast stars were her only tapers, the murmuring night-winds were her only music, around her drowsed the sleepy cattle, before the cave stretched the desolate wold gloomy and drear

with the deep and heavy shadows of the Judæan night.

But in that stony cave a great and wondrous glory shone! The barren wall of stone reflected the transcendent glory of Life; and it was thereby made more beautiful than any gold-covered wall, dimmed and dulled with the dust of mammon.

The Soul of Mary magnified the Lord, and her Spirit rejoiced. The mystery, the miracle of miracles was upon her — the matchless miracle of Motherhood; and she knew her Son for Emmanuel, "which being interpreted is, God with us."

Thus every woman who bears a son, in the hour that her son is born, may know that God is with her: and, knowing this, it matters not to her upon what bed she may be lying.

To one who does not see the Vision, external things become more and more tyrannous, until at last they are as cerements to bind that person to a dusty death-in-life. But to the Soul that sees the Vision, externals do not matter in the least degree; they cannot make nor mar Life.

O matchless lesson to learn! O glorious beholding of the deathless dower! This is the true emancipation of the Soul. It will raise life to the N'th power on this mortal plane.

And it is for every man to achieve by self-discipline and by cultivation. It is only by discipline and cultivation that the victory of emancipation can be gained. No great achievement is easily won; no scientific, no artistic accom-

plishment, even, is obtained without laborious days and much self-renunciation.

And if this greatest of all victories is to be won — the free emancipation from the bondage of life — man must train his mind to understand, subdue his body to forgo, teach his soul to see, and discipline his spirit to realise the Living Truth.

Then, although he is poor, he may inherit the earth; although he is feeble, he may find wings — he may 'renew his youth like the eagle's,' 'mount up and not be weary, walk and not faint.'

This is the Possible! — the imperishable crown of humanity!

And Mary sang her Magnificat.

O foolish generation, that reads without understanding, that hears without hearing, that sees without seeing!

There are those amongst the apostles of the New Order, demagogues, who lead — or mislead — the so-called proletariat, who have brought in evidence that glorious hymn of rejoicing as a proof of God's antipathy to riches, His hatred of the so-called privileged class.

Who knows the mind of the Almighty? Who knows whether or not God disapproves of riches — whether or not He has a hatred of *any* unfortunate class born to a false system, subjected to imperfect education as the rich have been? If it is anywhere proven that God disapproves of riches let men produce the proofs; they must, however, find more convincing proofs than the inspired words of the Virgin's Song.

Such an interpretation of the Magnificat is a complete reversal of facts

which disproves the commonsense of these demagogues, and thereby nullifies their arguments.

The Magnificat on the lips of the poor Mother proves *exactly the reverse* of the things that are claimed by those who use it as an evidence of God's attitude toward the privileged class.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."

Consider these words! Consider the circumstances under which they were said.

When Mary lifted up her voice and sang that splendid Song, the mighty still sat securely in their seats — and they were there to sit securely for many years to come. Rome was an established power, and class distinctions were

every day more sharply marked — the working classes were despised and ignominiously regarded even by their own countrymen, whose former manners of simplicity had been corrupted. Mary had in no wise changed her state: she had not risen in any worldly way: she had gained *nothing* externally: she was the same lowly wife of an humble working man, the same simple working woman of Nazareth; and yet, she suddenly became exalted — exalted higher than the mightiest of the world! Her soul and her spirit rejoiced and sang: she excelled in strength, in surety, in imperishable possessions: her whole outlook on Life had changed in the twinkling of an eye — former standards fell away, and all measurements had become new, because to her had come the divine Revelation: she knew her-

self to be throned in mighty seats above all queens; far, far above the shameless wanton who ruled in Herod's palace, decked with priceless jewels, with every physical desire gratified.

What matter to Mary now whether she be mighty or lowly — according to the standards of men? She knows herself exalted into a glorious estate. What to her is poverty? What to her is her humble home, her daily toil? Without a single gain of money, of place, of worldly circumstance, she knows herself suddenly lifted above the proudest of the earth and possessed, henceforth, of everlasting riches.

That heroic Song is a stirring proof that it makes not the slightest difference what the outward state may be. The ultimate measurement of possessions is of *that which is within.*

"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."

When Mary uttered these words with absolute assurance of their supreme truth, they were *outwardly* sharply contradicted: the mighty Romans were about her everywhere, feasting in their banqueting-halls — the prominent Pharisees and Jews were everywhere rolling up vast wealth: Herod was in his golden palace, with lavish luxury and royal trappings; on every side were powerful and wealthy men and women flashing in the radiance of dazzling jewels and gorgeous gems — dressed in shimmering stuffs, threaded with gold interwoven with pearls: and they were all feasting sumptuously on the fine flesh, the costly fish, the luscious fruits of the Orient:

Mary, the lowly, was standing in her peasant dress; she had eaten but the unleavened bread of her class, the figs and the olives from the wayside trees, with but fresh water from the wayside well: nothing had changed in any outward way; her condition was much poorer and much humbler even, than that of her girlhood had been: and yet, with swift revelation, she knew her own soul to be satisfied with good things for evermore. And with unerring prescience she knew these mighty ones of earth, feasting about her on every side, to be hungry — hungry of heart and soul; she knew them to be aching and trembling in the bondage of decay and fear, she saw for them the finality of the grave with its worms, its oblivion of dust and ashes. In her soul, quickened by the revelation that had come to her, Mary

could divine their emptiness — whose strength lay in their riches: she felt, intuitively, their poverty, hunger, starvation of soul. To her had come a new light and in the shining thereof all standards of measurement were forever different: and in the new standards of measurement, Mary discerned the emptiness of the world's fulness without the informing spirit.

This does not imply that riches are evil; this does not mean that poverty is well; nor does it imply that poverty is evil and wealth is well.

The story of the great song of Mary means simply this: the poorest are rich if they have the inner glory of life, and the richest are poor indeed, and go away empty, if they have not found that inner glory which *nothing can touch.*

The inspiring message of the Magnificat is not, as has been stated, a denunciation of riches: that dignifies riches far too much; the very phrasing of it is an undue emphasis upon riches. The inspiring message of the Magnificat is the relative unimportance of having riches or of being without them.

Exaltation is an inward thing. It may come to the lowly — as it did to Mary, and give to the world the song — "My soul doth magnify the Lord," the triumph of which rises high above all material limitations; and it may come to the mighty — as it did to King David, and give to the world the song — "Bless the Lord, O my soul," the triumph of which rises high above all physical limitations. But the exaltation has nothing to do with outward circumstance.

In King David's song, sickness and health are as one to the singer: it carries the sufferer, in spite of his pain, to the secret places of the most high where no evil can come nigh his dwelling place, where no plague can touch his soul.

In the Magnificat, poverty and riches are as one to the singer: it makes a working woman stand in her working dress and magnify the Lord and rejoice in her Life, her Love, her Motherhood!

It is significant that in these two songs of rejoicing — one gladly sung by a mighty king and the other joyously sung by a lowly woman — there is the same note of satisfied hunger, doubtless meaning, thereby, the age-long hunger of the human heart, the barren emptiness of heart which is the tragedy of the world.

Emptiness is an inward thing: it makes possessions, in themselves, the merest mockery of the heart, leaving it hungry — hungry unto Death.

"The rich he hath sent empty away."

Ah, indeed, the rich He hath sent empty away! Not by taking away their riches: simply by showing them the utter powerlessness of riches to solace, to console, to redeem, to exalt.

The many crying problems, the many economic sins that existed on that night in Judæa, are another chapter in the Book of Life — they are the claim of another, an historic consideration: the many crying problems, the many economic sins that exist to-day in every country and in every land that encircles the globe, are another chapter in the

Book of Life: they are the claim of another consideration — a consideration we should hasten to give to those problems: in all the historic records from those of Judæa to those of to-day, from the attitude of the men and women of the first century, to the attitude of the men and women of the twentieth century, there are found the same false selfishness and the same selfish falsity of men, the same crying evils to be met and mastered.

But as to the point of the present-day argument, the cry of the modern agitators, namely, that riches *in themselves* are denounced by Jesus, that the privileged class is denounced by Jesus — that is a false claim!

However strange and inexplicable it may seem; however we may think, in our partial view, that it would have hastened the development of the world

if it had been otherwise; however we may protest that the mind of the Master was too compassionate to permit cruel social distinctions without protest; however we may wish that Jesus had given some solution to the vital problems, which are as present and unsolved to-day as they were in the first years of the first century, this one thing stands forth unmistakably in the records, Jesus accepted the social order as He found it, with its social sins, its iniquitous patrician privileges, its class distinctions, its heart-breaking inequalities, its despotism and its human slavery, its powerful aristocratic luxury and its cruel bond-service.

In His mortal life Jesus stands against the background of social sin and injustice and utter disregard of human rights: and the two classes, with all their distinctions,

their wide differentiations, met in the Child.

It opens a wide field of thought and conjecture, if one desires to follow it: of deep questions, if one cares to ask them: but the fact remains that in the birth of that Baby in Bethlehem, the mighty and the lowly, poverty and riches, privileged class and working class, were united; the blood of patrician and plebeian, aristocrat and proletaire, king and toiler, met in the blood that flowed in the mortal body of the Child Jesus.

And in the first homage that was brought to the Child, they met objectively: the united contrast shines forth in that primitive and beautiful picture — a contrast which makes the true democracy, the true harmony.

THE MIGHTY AND THE LOWLY

Two groups of men came with tribute to the Child. They were three shepherds and three kings: three lowly shepherds clad in fustian, each bearing but a staff in his work-worn hand — three mighty kings arrayed in royal raiment, each bearing in his hand a regal gift.

O gracious picture that is interwoven in our hearts! Our minds unite these two groups and mark no difference between them. We say "the shepherds and the kings" — "the kings and the shepherds." It is the reiteration of the Christmas story given to us from earliest infancy; but the essential point of that story has not been taught nor even considered.

The shepherds and the kings are *as one:* although worldly power, position, wealth and caste divide them in out-

ward ways, yet they are regarded *as of one order*.

Why? Because they were united in the great essentials; they were both moved by the same inward Spirit.

This is the true uniting of class with class.

When the Vision of the divine Reality comes to the heart of man, as it did to those six men, then the lowly peasant will be a king, in the reality of his personality, and the mighty king will be as a peasant in his lowly humility.

To feel this deeply, to believe this really, to act upon this always, is to show forth the all-rounded Democracy.

As it was in the beginning, so was it at the end. As it was in Bethlehem, so was it on Calvary.

Jesus died upon the cross, despised and rejected of men; He was crucified as a malefactor: He was considered one of the lowest of the proletariat.

But it was Joseph of Arimathæa, a man of untold wealth and powerful position, who took that precious body and gave to it the care and the distinction that wealth and wealth alone can give — the spotless linen, the costly spices, the proper preparation for burial, and the hallowed housing in a splendid sepulchre, hewn out of the solid rock, new and noteworthy.

As it was in the beginning, and at the end, so was it throughout the days of the mortal life of Jesus, in all the example of His ministry.

He showed no favour — He marked no differentiation between class and class,

between plebeian and patrician, between aristocrat and proletaire.

This is the note that has ever been left unemphasised in the consideration of, or contemplation of, His history — left unemphasised although it illustrates that the democracy of Jesus was a true brotherhood, not a brotherhood made by a social state. Brotherhood to Jesus was all-inclusive, never exclusive.

Each half of the record has been emphasised in turn to the exclusion of the other half.

The proletaires claim that hitherto those who have taught the Word of Jesus have not considered the proletaires. This is true.

But now the proletaires do not consider the aristocrats: they lay the emphasis on the fact that Jesus was no

respecter of persons — and mean, thereby, that He respected *only* the poor and was no respecter of, no sympathiser with, the rich.

As we dispassionately contemplate with consideration His attitude to all men, we find it is broken at no point.

Jesus *was* no respecter of persons! Neither of the mighty — nor of men of low degree; neither of the rich — nor of the poor; neither of the man who wore a gold ring and fine apparel — nor of the man who was ringless and wore rags; neither of the man who held powerful place in the state — nor of the man whose pride lay in the fact that he held no place. Jesus measured men by standards before unknown, standards that break down the dividing line — as no revolution nor outward change could do, standards that all

must learn if the world is to evolve to *permanent* betterment. Jesus preached a Gospel in the clear light of which all outward seemings fall away.

We cannot consider and contemplate the story of His life without a thrilling realisation — which gives wings to the soul with the expanding thought — that life is more than meat: which is to say, that the essence of life is more than the circumstance of life — the spiritual life of the soul is more than any external condition of life.

When to a man this emancipation has come, this truth is known, then is he set free from all false standards — then, and then only, will he know the real meaning of democracy.

Let us consider the Democracy of Jesus as illustrated by His life on earth!

He broke bread with the lowly fisher-folk — He supped with the chief Pharisees in splendour.

He rested in the humble home of Peter, served by the mother of Peter's wife — He took up His residence in the house of the wealthy Zacchæus and brought joy to the house by His coming.

He sat down upon the grass on the hillside to eat with the common people — He sat down at the lavish tables of the publicans and partook of meat with the tax-collectors and the money-gatherers.

He chose, as one of His disciples, a lowly fisherman whom He called from his fishing-net at the end of a long day's toil — and He chose, as another one of His disciples, a publican, a tax-gatherer, whom He called from the receipt of custom.

From the one disciple He graciously received the fresh fish which he had caught in his well-worn net — it was the best which that disciple had to offer: from the other disciple He received a lavish feast made in His honour where the Roman officials and the moneyed men were gathered about the luxurious board.

He traversed the dusty highway with no water to wash His weary feet — He sat in the banqueting-hall, and upon His feet He allowed the precious spikenard, very costly, to be poured from the alabaster box, broken for Him.

He drank the unspiced water of the wayside well from the hands of an outcast woman — He drank the Roman wine at Roman feasts, served by the hands of bondmen and of slaves.

He taught in the royal porch of the

majestic Temple: He looked upon the stately pillars carved with pomegranate, the tessellated marble floors, the richly ornamented doorways where costly curtains, heavy with handiwork, hung on rings of gold, the "Gate Beautiful," of wrought brass, magnificent; and the beauty, the historic significance of it all, entered into His sermons and His similitudes.

He taught, also, on the free and open hillside beneath the arching blue of heaven: around Him was the manifold loveliness of the oriental country-side common to the lowliest — the brilliant colours of rocks and hills, the myriad wild-flowers everywhere; He looked upon the dawn, the sunset, the bird-nesting, the fruit-blossoming, the seed-sowing, and the harvest; and the beauty and the eternal significance of it all

entered into His sermons and His similitudes.

He held in His hand the coin on which was imprinted the superscription and image of Cæsar, and, smiling subtly at those who had thought to trip Him, He granted His tribute to the mighty monarch of Rome; He held in His hand, also, the wayside lily, considered its beauty, and proclaimed its splendour surpassing that of the mighty monarch of Israel.

It is manifest that the outward circumstance of His own life varied with changing conditions; probably it was dependent on the money-bag which, it is recorded, was held by the disciples and which was empty or filled according to the result of the labours of that little band.

But this change of condition made not the slightest difference to Jesus.

The calm, serene indifference He maintained to all external things is soul-stimulating to consider: He made no comment on the chances and changes of personal circumstance, no comment on what He had of material possessions, no comment on what He was denied of material possessions. To Him the open hillside was as beautiful as the majestic mansion, the lily of the field as great a possession as the pearl of great price. His whole life was a sublime disregard of externals.

Two instances are recorded of men, desiring to follow Him, each of whom questioned Him as to His habitation: His answer was in both cases governed by the condition of the moment, both

answers were frank in their candour and straightforward courtesy, but they showed that He well knew both sides of practical experience.

Once, a certain man said unto Him — "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and Jesus answered — "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Again, two men said unto Him — "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" and that time Jesus answered — "Come and see," and the record continues, "They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day."

Two men are marked with special distinction in the immortal story. Of two men are said the incomparable words — "Jesus loved him!"

Jesus loved all men: love was His life, love was His mission, love was His revelation.

But there is a vast difference between the divine compassionate love which never knows the touch of anger nor of reproach — the *caritas* which never fails — and that love which holds a personal quality within it, an inestimable gift of friendship, of choice, of intimacy.

To two men, this personal love of Jesus — warmed with the emotion of His glorious heart — was given: two men were crowned with that supreme favour in the history of the world. And here, again, the meeting of extremes is made manifest. Even in the gift of His personal love, Jesus was no respecter of persons. Of these two men, the one was a fisherman — the son of Zebedee —

whom Jesus had first seen in a fishing-boat mending his net at the end of a long day's toil; the other was a rich young man, the owner of great possessions.

"Ah," cries our protesting Brother in quick heat of argument, "did not Jesus reprove that rich young man and tell him to go and sell all he had and give to the poor, that he might become perfect?"

Yes, verily! Because for *that* young man there was no other way. His heart was set on his possessions, — things, things, things, — possessions, possessions, possessions! They were microbes in that young man's soul; for him, there could be no spiritual health until he had gotten rid of them.

It is an ethical law that it is necessary to get rid of everything that hampers

the growth of the soul if the soul is to attain its full stature. All great philosophers have taught this, and, supremely, Jesus, the greatest of all philosophers, taught it.

But the charge of Jesus to the rich young man was no argument against wealth, *as such*, because, although He charged this rich young man to get rid of his possessions, He did not give the same charge to the rich Zacchæus, to the noble Centurion, to Nicodemus, nor to Joseph of Arimathæa; — thank God, not to Joseph of Arimathæa, for had all the possessions of Joseph of Arimathæa been given away, who would have rendered the homage that wealth and wealth alone can bring to that blessed body broken upon the tree!

It is true that Jesus rebuked this rich young man who had great possessions:

but did He not also rebuke Peter, the lowly fisherman who had no possessions, who had left all to follow Him?

Indeed, He rebuked him far more sharply than He rebuked the rich young man. He turned and said unto Peter — "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

He rebuked the rich young man because his heart and pride lay in his possessions: He rebuked Peter, the poor fisherman, because *his* pride lay in *having given up his possessions.*

It was not wealth — not the possessions of the rich young man that brought sorrow to Jesus; it was the love of them which absorbed him to the exclusion of the realities of life: it was the pride in

the heart of the young man, which Jesus rebuked.

It was not Peter's poverty that He approved — it was not because Peter was of the unprivileged class that he was welcome to the Master; it was the spirit of lowliness and meekness within the soul of Peter. When, for an hour, that lowliness and meekness gave place to pride, it brought sorrow to Jesus, and He sternly rebuked Peter.

As in the daily life of Jesus, so in His miracles, He showed no favour when He performed them, no partiality, no discrimination of caste, of class, of place, of circumstance in life.

He raised the son of the poor widow of Nain — He raised the son of the rich nobleman of Capernaum.

He granted the prayer of the blind beggar by the wayside — He granted the prayer of the powerful centurion of Rome.

He healed the daughter of the despised Canaanite woman — He raised the daughter of the wealthy Jairus.

He healed the impotent man who lay beside the pool, with no man to help him, — He healed the favourite of the High Priest empanoplied in all the power of the Sanhedrim.

He refreshed the weary multitude of common folk in the desert; He made wheaten bread for them to eat — He refreshed the thirsty patricians at the wedding feast; He made red and fruity wine for them to drink.

As in His miracles — so in His parables.

Throughout the cycle of His ministry,

Jesus marked no difference, drew no line, made no distinction in the subjects of those soul-penetrating stories.

With equal impartiality, He infused His parables with lessons for the poor, and He infused His parables with lessons for the rich. With equal impartiality He drew His illustrations from the details of the life of the proletaire — showing the closest familiarity with the work and habits of the poor; and He drew illustrations from the details of the life of the patrician — showing the closest familiarity with the life and habits of the rich: He drew His parables from the toil of the day-labourer — showing the closest familiarity with the work of the toiler; and He drew His parables from wealth, luxury and lavish living — showing the closest familiarity with the life of the aristocrat.

The toilers for a penny a day — the nobleman's dealing with his vast estate.

The ploughman with his plough in the furrow — the rich man building his stately mansion upon the rock.

The woman putting a little leaven into three measures of meal — the steward putting the talents out to usury.

The widow's mite — the ten pieces of silver.

The humble sower sowing his seed into the ground — the wealthy householder bringing forth treasures new and old.

The fisherman casting his net into the sea — the great treasures which a man hid in a field.

The oil in the lamp — the wedding feast of the king's son.

The poor man who put a new patch into an old garment — the rich man who built new houses and new barns.

The grain of mustard seed — the pearl of great price.

It is true that He spake one parable of a certain rich man, and at the end of that parable we find the rich man in Hell.

But it is also true that He spake *another* parable of *another* rich man, and at the end of that parable we find the Good Samaritan — the model set by Jesus for all men to follow.

Thus He shows beyond a peradventure that the difference He intended to illustrate was not in the circumstance of the one man, nor in the circumstance of the other man — not in the *having* of riches, nor in the *not having* of riches: the difference was *in the heart* of each man. The one fared sumptuously every day and left a hungry neighbour at his gate, with no thought of his need — with no

sympathy for another's suffering: naturally he was in Hell; Hell is the ultimate effect of a state of selfishness — one does not have to die to discover Hell. The other stopped in his journey to Jericho, descended from his horse, lifted his neighbour in his arms, poured oil into his wounds, and made his money the true means of service: and he was in Heaven, or rather, the kingdom of Heaven, which is Love, was in him.

Twice, without parables, without metaphor, Jesus granted a direct answer to the questioner: twice, He vouchsafed His Word regarding the riddle of the universe — the problem of the soul: to two individuals He set forth His Gospel regarding man's relation to God.

The two honoured by Him as chosen to receive the Truth give, anew, em-

phatic proof that Jesus was no respecter of persons.

The one was a lowly woman of Samaria, a toiler, a drawer of water, an outcast, a despised sinner; the other was a ruler of Israel, a man of distinction and of wealth, who sat in the seats of the mighty.

Could any two persons be further apart in class, in caste, in position, in outward religion — as the world counts such things? Yet it was to those two He chose to speak the supreme Word.

The Word to each was, *in essence*, the same. It was the verbal expression of the lesson Jesus had ever taught by miracle, by parable, and by the conduct of His life from the happy stable to the bitter cross, the lesson that it is the Spirit only which gives life.

To neither Nicodemus in his power, nor

to the woman of Samaria in her sin, did He give any outward formula of life, any rigid code of conduct, any rite or ritual of worship, any programme of social procedure.

To the rich and powerful Nicodemus He did not say, "Privilege is wrong; high place is unrighteous; wealth is wicked; — if you would inherit eternal life, sell all you have and give to the poor." He said only — "Ye must be born again." And to the tiresomely literal argument of Nicodemus —

"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

He answered:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

To the poor outcast woman, abandoned, despised by men, deep-stained with sin, He did not say — "You cannot approach the altar of the Most High until you have obeyed the law, and man is well satisfied with your canonical fitness to worship God in the appointed place."

No, He said none of these things.

Instead, He freely offered her Living Water; and to her surprise at the simplicity of the hope held out to her sin-laden heart, He answered:

"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Jesus sent the sinner neither to the great temple dedicated to Jehovah, nor

to the great mountain of Samaria — neither to the one decreed form nor to the other decreed form. He sent her to commune with God in her own spirit.

The echo of the truth falls from the lips of the Master and rings clear above all waging warfares of church and state, of social factions and of social class.

Hearken to the echo like a reiterated strain. It comes from hillside and wayside, from the seats of the mighty, from the gathering-places of the powerful and it comes from the by-paths where the lowly walk, from the shadowed places where the outcasts and the malefactors hide:

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU."

When will man cease to cry in the streets his foolish proclamation of prom-

ise — "Lo, here — lo, there, is the kingdom of God"?

When will man cease to build up vast Kingdoms of Observation, claiming a warrant for them in the Word of Jesus?

Let us remember that Jesus knew life as never man knew it. His philosophic all-rounded Vision presented the eternal truth when He said —

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Could a vital word be plainer, more direct, more conclusive?

Jesus recommended no programme, no plan of action, no organisation of work. His recommendation, His advice, His entreaty to man, was to seek a spiritual kingdom, unseen, within the soul, of

which the world can take no note, except of its fruits. No parish paper can advertise it; no social society nor federation can proclaim it; no organised social plant can accomplish it; no strenuous bustling faction can bring it to pass. It lies deep in each soul — its High Priest is the Everlasting Spirit, its fruit is true and lasting Brotherhood.

This is no plea for the acceptance of outward conditions; it is no suggestion that outward conditions should not be changed; God forbid: they cannot be changed too soon: every one should be willing to lay down his life to change them with broad, sweeping, radical changes.

Let every protest be raised against inordinate, selfish accumulation, against the unjust distribution of wealth, the

unjust control of land, the unjust ownership of the product of labour, against the unequal opportunities granted to men.

The social methods of men are selfish — alas, they are selfish beyond all thought! The industrial conditions are wrong — alas, they are wrong beyond all thought: they are calling, shrieking for reform!

To consider this reform, to study the welfare and improvement of the environment of our fellowmen, to work with mind and heart and soul to bring about a better social system, is the obligation and the trust of every human being who holds a spark of honour in his breast.

It is to the bitter shame of humanity that conditions are as they are, and, until we change them, we are responsible

for them. We should work for them as we work for political and sanitary reforms, as a part of our national and civic duty: it is the obligation of a common honesty: it is to be done as we pay our taxes or our debts.

The social disease following the unjust distribution of wealth, the unrighteous control of land, the iniquitous ownership of the product of labour, should be studied as the diseases of cancer and tuberculosis are studied; and every man and woman who has learned the principles of Jesus will so desire to study them, and will find a way of betterment.

But the more sincere is the desire, the greater the determination for social reform, for economic and social betterment, the more consecrated the resolve to bring them to pass, the more necessary it is that the accomplishment thereof

should not be imperilled by false methods, and that the truth should not be perverted to support it.

The insistence of the modern agitators that Jesus' chief mission was solely to preach an economic and a social gospel, and that the lesson He taught was confined to the reconstruction of the social system, and the reform of the economic plan of life, from the outside, is directly contrary to facts. The proclamation of this error should be avoided, even from the motives of wise policy. It will foil the desired end of ultimate accomplishment.

The Gospel of Jesus is not a system: it is a Revelation.

The Gospel of Jesus does not teach a code: it teaches a new life of the spirit.

His message is to the individual soul. It is true that the vital principle of that

message is the relation of the individual soul to the universal soul, to the social soul and to the social conscience, but it must come as the inevitable result of spiritual force to be of any value.

Another vital principle of the philosophy of Jesus is the obligation of fruit-bearing: the regeneration of the soul must be known by the fruit it bears and by that alone.

Love, helpful, eager love, lavish in service, is the consummate proof, the criterion of the reality in the individual soul of the principle of Jesus. The highest wisdom for the apostles of the New Order is to follow the example of Jesus and preach and teach the rebirth of the soul — the supreme law of the great evangel: then the rest will follow: from the regeneration of the individual souls will come the regeneration of society.

It is foolish for the apostles of the New Order to urge that former methods have not done this: because there has been too much institutionalism and dogmatism and too little brotherhood in the past, that does not prove that a new order of external formation and altruistic dogmatism comes any nearer to the truth.

There are codes and systems and orders and methods enough, for everything, everywhere: but the Message of Jesus is the one Revelation.

The world has ever groaned and cried out for a revelation of Truth, from the time when the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness of Sinai — even until to-day when the children of the present generation are wandering in the wilderness of Mammon, still worshipping the Golden Calf; since

the day when Plato cried out for the Logos 'to teach erring man how to pray' — until to-day when men are sounding heaven and earth for a sign.

If we really have this revelation, this rebirth, in our hearts, the rest will follow as surely as the morning star and the light of dawn follow the darkness and the night. If we have it not, then every accomplishment is but transitory.

Our little systems of economics, of betterment, and of social reform will have their little day, but they will be of no avail: they will "have their day and cease to be."

Jesus knew, as all philosophers know, the danger of riches, the interruption of them, the materialising, suffocating, corroding effect of them upon character, when they obsess the soul. Possessions, riches, position, power, are

dangerous and perilous to the great development of life. O perilous danger! O dangerous peril! They asphyxiate the man who is absorbed by love of them: they block the way of the soul's advance. Jesus understood this and He said:

"It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

These words have been flung of late as a dogmatic conclusion to all those who have found themselves born into a life freighted with the responsibility of wealth and position.

These words were not uttered as a conclusion, but as a metaphor: even as it was a metaphor when He said:

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and *swallow a camel.*"

Since the days when the Master, heavy and lonely at heart because of

the dullness of His hearers, cried out—"Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?" men have gone on literalising His subtle meaning-freighted words, without reason, logic or common-sense, treating the astute intellect and the flashing genius of Jesus with a stupid disrespect that is as futile as it is irreverent; giving to His simple direct words less intellectual consideration and discernment than is given to the clever author of the hour.

Surely, Jesus did not mean to say that it was a habit of the Pharisees to swallow life-sized camels as they would swallow pills. It is clear that the phrase 'swallowing camels' was merely a striking, attention-compelling metaphor, a graphic, unforgetable illustration.

And so in the former case Jesus undoubtedly used the camel in the same

way. Had He meant that it was as *impossible* for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God as it was for a camel to go through a needle's eye, He would not have followed His saying with these further words (in answer to His disciples' ever-ready question — "Who then can be saved?") "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

It is manifest that Jesus meant merely to illustrate a very difficult achievement.

The needle's eye! A metaphor of something very small, even as the camel was the metaphor of something very large — a metaphor for the heart of man to ponder.

Jesus evidently intended to suggest to the subtle oriental mind of the man who had watched the camel bend its

knee and unload its treasures, the way to overcome the difficulty and to accomplish the result.

But it is as false to say, with the modern agitator, that Jesus taught that wealth *in itself* is sin, as it is false to say that Jesus taught that poverty *in itself* is virtue: it is as stupid to maintain that because Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," He denounced all possessions, as it is stupid for the banal literalist to maintain that because Jesus made the astute observation, "Ye have the poor with you always," He thereby proclaimed a complete acceptance of the unequal social conditions and of the continuation of the conditions which arise from the criminal selfishness of man. He proclaimed

no acceptance of them, neither did He proclaim any denouncement of them.

It is true He denounced the unrighteous getting of wealth, He sharply condemned those who devoured widows' houses and those who ground down the faces of the poor, just as He denounced all other sins — especially and emphatically, hypocrisy, insincerity and pharisaism. But it is a striking fact that one finds, as one reads the record with care and consideration, that Jesus, for some wise reason of His own, let the complicated and the crying problems of economic and social conditions entirely alone. He confined His teaching to the great and vital principles for the soul, to the compassionate yearning over the individual child of man to make him an individual child of God.

It is a strange and striking fact,

explain it as we may, that Jesus neither stressed, urged nor even advised a readjustment of any social or economic laws, customs, or even of accepted standards, although, in the days of Roman rule, the laws, customs and accepted standards were against all justice and all righteousness.

He denounced no social condition: He said no word of condemnation of the grave social sins that cried for swift redress on every side: nor of the fatal despotism of the imperial government which treated men and provinces as though they were mere grinding-mills from which to turn out tribute to Rome; nor of the cruel class distinctions which allowed one class of men to tread another class under foot as though they were the dry and barren dust: He did not denounce the publicans and tax-gatherers

who were extorting money from His people; nor the Roman cohorts — notwithstanding the fact that the inevitable fruit of His philosophy must be peace and goodwill to all mankind: He did not even utter a protest against the incomparable wrong of human slavery which then prevailed: He advocated no social reform whatsoever: He organised no economic changes whatsoever. Moreover, He said no word in praise of political freedom, of political equality nor of social equality. The freedom He taught was a freedom that out-soared all political limitations — the equality He taught was an equality that out-soared all social distinctions.

Does this imply that He was indifferent to the social and economic sins on every side? We have only to read His words, His ideal of life, to know

that no one had so clear a concept of the possibilities of a perfect state of society, so high a realisation of what life might be, and so keen an apprehension of the folly and blindness of those who leave life as it is.

Ponder His compassion, His divine love, poured forth on all who came to Him, His yearning over the sin and suffering and the sorrow of Jerusalem, bearing the pain of all who suffered in any way, in His own comprehending heart! He carefully refrained, however, from preaching any social propaganda, or urging any social change, *as such*, of giving any social formula whatsoever, or any political programme whatsoever.

It is manifest that, for some wise reason of His own, He thought it best not to do so.

Perhaps it was that He knew all social conditions are but the passing phases of a constantly changing, constantly evolving world, the temporary and transitory ebb and flow of the construction, destruction and reconstruction of social orders that have repeated themselves over and over in every outward experiment since history began.

Monarchy, with its privileged class, is defied by Democrats until a Republic is established: then, in turn, the Republic evolves its privileged class and that is defied by Socialists: Socialism, in its most promising moment, is confronted by the Philosophic Anarchists: in turn, the Philosophic Anarchists are threatened by the I. W. W's. — and so it goes on and on and on, an endless chain.

Jesus — who saw with keen wisdom the end from the beginning — knew that

unless the soul of man is changed, this will be forever the result of all external systems of betterment.

Selfishness, arrogance, hatred and distrust are cankers in the heart — in the individual heart and the social heart — *they* are the things that must be radically changed, not merely the conditions brought about by them; for if the *conditions* merely are treated, it is but shifting the ground, and the old problem is found confronting mankind in a new form.

The arrogance of the proud privileged man, who scorns his brother because he is poor, is detestable! But the arrogance of the proud labouring man, who hates his brother because he is rich, is fundamentally the same.

The pride of the powerful man who thinks himself superior to his brother

because he sits in the seats of the mighty, and the pride of the man of low degree who thinks himself superior to his powerful brother because Jesus came only to the poor and lowly — are fundamentally the same.

The egoism of the man who thinks not of his brother and the egoism of the man whose pride lies in the modern shibboleth of Brotherhood — are fundamentally the same.

The pettiness of the man who patronises the poor and the pettiness of the man who envies the rich — are fundamentally the same.

The self-vaunting of the aristocrat who is haughty and rude toward the proletaire and the self-vaunting of the proletaire who is hateful and rude toward the aristocrat — are fundamentally the same.

The sin of those who shoot the strikers and the sin of those who dynamite the capitalists — are fundamentally the same.

The ungodliness of those who allow the pauper to starve to death and the ungodliness of those who allow the king to be assassinated — are fundamentally the same.

Selfishness, unrighteousness, sin, *in all its phases*, can only be purged away by the inward regeneration of the individual heart working from within, outward, to the social heart: this regeneration must be before there can be any lasting betterment.

The regeneration of the heart and life! That was the message of the Master, and that alone can bring the change that will avail.

The regeneration of life is the renewal,

the rebirth, into something more living, more universal, more vast, more cosmic.

This word has been so long used in a traditional and theological way, with dogmatic emphasis on the letter of its meaning, that we have forgotten the living spirit of it — even though the reality of its meaning is spread out for us as a living parable in the miracle of every blossoming Spring-time.

The renewal and the rebirth of life is to the soul what the Spring-time is to the cold and barren earth.

And it is the change that comes from this regeneration that should be taught, preached, worked for — and not any lesser change.

Any lesser change is but shifting the ground of discontent. Any change on an *outward* basis is but going over the old error, which still remains error even

though the purpose and the aim which impel it may have in them a higher motive.

Every remedy of circumstance that comes from *without* only opens a new avenue for other evils and errors to come in. It is the law of life on its material side — as history illustrates.

Jesus knew the heart of man and He knew that the change of the individual heart was the best means to the righteous end of changing the world.

To build up economic and social changes in any other way than by the working of the Spirit is a foiling of that end.

Alas! whilst all this modern strenuous proclamation is going on — as to the intent of Jesus in regard to social systems, as to the exact social economic quality of His Gospel — the essential

message of the great Teacher, for which humanity is hungering and thirsting without knowing it, is being drowned in the din, the strident disputes of the hour.

The great possibility of life is being lost in the eagerness to proclaim a newly discovered gospel — a gospel that holds a programme of procedure. And all the while the soul of man groans and travails for immortal help on this mortal plane.

It is an awful but an incontrovertible fact, proved by generation after generation since the world began, that "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." This is said as an echo of the funeral note, with the solemn funereal trappings conventionalising the words: but when separated from the traditional associations and considered as a fact of history, it is found to be invariably

true — it is, and has been, the common experience of all mankind. One circumstance is bettered — and straightway a new trouble comes: every assuaged condition brings a new condition from which arises a new and unexpected tragedy of pain. Thus has it ever been since man was born upon the earth.

O the heart-ache, the sorrow, the suffering that is the destined lot of man! O the bitter anguish, the tragedy of pain that is the destined lot of woman!

There is only one thing that can strengthen, can fortify the soul to meet and overcome the inevitable tragedy of life — that is the renewal of the spirit. No *outward* change can permanently help.

The cry is for social betterment — and why? That man may be more

happy, more satisfied, more comfortable and more content.

But will social betterment make him so? Not permanently, not surely — no matter what the social change may be!

Contentment, happiness, satisfaction, joy, abiding pleasure, are the portion of no class alone; they lie in no external condition, in no outward circumstance, however financially prosperous that condition may be. Suffering, sorrow, pain, woe, unhappiness, are the portion of no class alone; they lie in no external condition, in no outward circumstance, however deplorable that condition may be.

Mortal man *cannot* escape anguish in this mortal world.

In bettering his outward condition man only temporarily suspends his fate. Quickly he is assailed by some other kind of suffering which is as difficult to bear

as his former state — perhaps more so. Outward change is like an endless chain: the condition desired, when gained, is *foiled of its benefit* by *new* conditions that have arisen to threaten the enjoyment of the achieved betterment.

Poverty is hard, poverty is cruel, poverty seems unendurable, but poverty is *only one* of the many grievous burdens that are laid upon mankind — and by no means the most unendurable burden.

The same fatality may come from causes other than poverty.

A certain pauper at one time was starving; he rebelled against his fate; he struggled desperately to better his condition: he fought day and night with fortune: finally he became a millionaire; he lived sumptuously in splendour — his table was spread with the finest

viands, the rarest wines, with all the luxury that wealth can procure; for a brief time he enjoyed the brilliant fortune which he had won in a hard fight.

Then, like a thief in the night, a direful disease fell swiftly upon him; the functions of his body refused to do their work; the processes of assimilation were choked; and, once again, that man was starving; slowly he starved to death. His financial condition had become all that he desired, but the *very same* fate, against which he had rebelled, overtook him.

As he lay upon his bed in mortal weakness, what mattered it to him whether he starved from lack of bread, or from lack of assimilation — *he starved!*

Starvation was his lot — ordained by destiny — and he had spent all his time, energies, intellect and zeal in trying to work out the problem of bettering his

financial condition to escape it, and he had not escaped it: he had gone directly toward it.

Now, straightway, he must find a new courage wherewith to meet the same fate in a new guise. His soul must find something to lighten the way of shadow he is passing — to open the eternal Vision to his dimmed and dying eyes, something that lies not in any outward circumstance: something deep within his soul that *nothing* can touch nor overcome.

If he had concentrated his energies and his mind on learning the deeper philosophy of Jesus, he would have been free of the bondage that fate now lays upon him.

A certain woman once sat in a barren room destitute of all beauty; she was

very poor: the blank, bare walls brought fierce rebellion to her, a passionate lover of beauty.

She cried out against her fate. She worked until she changed her condition; she became a citizen of the world of wealth; beauty and works of art surrounded her, soft colours and lovely fabrics; beneath the windows of her palace stretched the rolling verdure of her flower-bordered lawns. Suddenly, without warning, the optic nerves snapped in her eyes, and she was blind — hopelessly, helplessly, blind.

The horror of great darkness was upon her, she had lost even the glory that had shone for her of old, for, in her barren room, she had been able to see the love-light in the eyes of her friends.

Of what avail to her was all the beauty that surrounded her?

She cried for new courage to meet her dreadful fate — the blackness of the night that shut her in. Her soul agonized for inward light by which she could see the Vision to help her bear the lonely isolation of her lot — the Vision within her soul that nothing could darken.

Alas for her! that she had not concentrated her energies upon gaining the philosophy of Jesus; that would have prepared her for the final bondage of her fate.

And ever there is the pain of death.

There is that cold, dark river in the Shadowed Valley which everyone must cross, alone; some strengthening power *must* be found to steady the feet as we step into its chill waters and some strengthening power must be found to support us as we tread the lonely way

back from the shore and walk through the Shadowed Valley alone — after watching the waters close over the beloved one.

Personal death is the least part of the terror which besets us: to the rational man his own death is an exciting, delightful adventure — the going out into freedom and emancipation; but the measureless anguish is the death of those we love — that is the supreme pain of mortal life! That inscrutable, inevitable approach of the grim and awful power which silently, relentlessly, tears asunder those who are one, to leave the other divided half alone, reaching aching arms and straining aching eyes into the void.

Somewhere, somehow, there must be found *something* to help the heart to bear the unbearable. There must be something triumphant accomplished in

the soul that will enable it to meet *all* circumstance — even the circumstance of death, for death is a circumstance that neither riches, kings, emperors, potentates nor any New Order nor any modern emancipator can change.

And there is that climax of burdens — injustice, betrayal, misjudgment. What mortal heart can bear these cruel burdens without immortal help! How infinitely beyond poverty is this pain! Millions and multi-millions of golden coin are as stones and pebbles to the heart that is thus wronged, to the spirit that is alone and sorrowful unto death.

The bettering of external conditions does not, cannot, change the tragedy of life — cannot secure freedom, happiness, ease of heart. The mind should be applied to finding the supreme philos-

ophy that can, and does, prepare a man to meet every possible phase of human suffering, to rise above every kind of anguish, whatsoever it may be.

It is the modern habit to divert the mind from the superlative offered to man, for the seeking, by constantly dinning into the ears the comparative benefit of a practical programme.

It is as if a man prone to thirst, with parched lips cried out for refreshment, and when there was at hand a clear and hidden spring of crystal water flowing free, one stopped him on the way to the finding of that spring to swab his mouth with moistened sponges.

Who would concern himself with preaching a temporary stop-gap, when, by searching and seeking, one may find the immortal day-spring? Who would spend all one's energies proclaiming a

superficial change when, by proclaiming the great lesson of Jesus, there can be found a great emancipation, the fruit of which will be a *change that nothing can change.*

Remember! The assertion of these pages is that herein is no lack of sympathy nor of approval for the economic revolution that is moving the world.

The imperative need of the social and economic betterment which men are now demanding with cries from the housetops is far greater, far more necessary even than they know. But the need of an inward solvent to meet *all* things that may befall, all conditions that may arise, is the greatest need in all the world — and this is the great emancipation, the glorious Possible, which Jesus taught to men.

Poverty is not pleasant, poverty is not comfortable — but disease, deformity, cruelty and betrayal are more unpleasant and more uncomfortable.

Hunger for food is desperately hard to bear — but hunger for love is far harder to bear.

An empty stomach is a sharp ache — but an empty heart is a sharper ache.

Uncongenial, grinding work is a trial to endure — but blindness is a far worse trial to endure.

Economic injustice is cruel — but it is not half so cruel as the injustice which misjudges and condemns, unheard, a loving heart.

It is terrible to starve to death or to be killed by injustice, but one can lie down and die with rapture if one has the inward joy: and if one has it not, one cannot die with any

pleasure, nor with any delight in the adventure.

Mortal man cannot escape his portion of pain in this mortal life. The inestimable gain for the human heart is the power to out-soar all condition of every suffering, of every sorrow.

This inward thing, this possession of the soul, is no churchly state of mind: many philosophers have had it and it made them rise above all outward circumstance. Socrates had it and he stood before his accusers and heard, undaunted, their verdict of death and turned and spoke those noble words which are alive to-day —

"I am hardly angry with my accusers, or with those who have condemned me to die. . . . I have one request to make of them. When my sons grow up, visit

them with punishment, my friends, and vex them in the same way that I have vexed you, if they seem to you to care for riches, or for any other thing, before virtue: and if they think that they are something, when they are nothing at all, reproach them, as I have reproached you, for not caring for what they should, and for thinking that they are great men when in fact they are worthless. And if you will do this, I myself and my sons will have received our deserts at your hands. But now the time has come, and we must go hence; I to die, and you to live. Whether life or death is better is known to God, and to God only."

After he had thus spoken he drank the hemlock, and, smiling, passed into the Shades.

What to Socrates was anything that might befall when he possessed this spirit?

There are two philosophers who are alike in their philosophy — Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. A sentence on life from the one might have been written by the other: each rose to that upper realm where great souls dwell.

Yet the one was the mighty emperor of the world, with the imperial crown upon his head, the inflowing wealth of the earth at his feet; the other was the lowly slave, chained to a prison stone, broken by cruelty and wrong.

The mighty and the lowly are as one in the essential life if they have found *the inward kingdom.*

Nero is dead, myriad emperors and kings uncounted are dust, and queens unnumbered are scattered ashes, but

Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus are immortally alive: although they were in the two classes most far apart, according to the world's classification, yet they rank forever equal.

This is a striking proof that the true equality is an inward thing and the outward classification of the world into the mighty and the lowly is a measurement by false and superficial standards. The mighty, as Nero, are put down from their seats when the consuming hand of disease and death touches them with fatal finger: the lowly, as Epictetus, are exalted and live on forever in the world if they have given to the world a living word.

Marcus Aurelius affirms, "Things themselves touch not the soul, not in the least degree:" and all outward circumstance is but a passing thing.

Of the many philosophers who have taught this truth, Jesus taught it the most convincingly and illustrated it the most perfectly in His beautiful life.

The contemplation of that life is arousing to those who consider it historically.

Quite apart from the spiritual side, when one contemplates the altitude in which Jesus moved on earth, one is taken psychically to an high mountain-top.

So long Jesus has been looked upon through the eyes of interpreters and commentators that the world fails to realise the thrilling dramatic beauty and dynamic power of His mere personality.

The record of the life of Jesus read simply, as the story of any other man is read, without prejudice or preconception, without theological bent or bias, shows a glorious being of the heroic type.

To many, Jesus is the very God of very God, begotten, not made: to many, He is the Son of God, only as every reborn soul may be the son of God: but in either case He is, on the human side, *an historic Person.*

Even if He be very God of very God, He took upon Himself the garment of humanity, not to show the God for men to worship, — that could have been accomplished if He had stayed in Heaven: — He desired to *be at one with all men*, in all ways, sharing their life, and to be approached as man is approached: He, therefore, lived as a man on this earth — and as such He should be considered.

Yet there are multitudes of men who, not accepting Jesus theologically, will not consider His life historically because they think of Him only as a being en-

shrined in ecclesiastic seclusion, or obsolete superstition.

If these unthinking men and women would once consider Jesus as a living character, would read His life and His words as they read the life and words of any other character in history, they could not fail to give Him their utmost enthusiasm.

If those who have neglected to consider Jesus, because they have thought He was a churchly possession only, and those who have turned away from Him in reaction from the traditional picture forced upon their youth, will once turn and look upon Him as a man walking on the earth, they will find captivating, compelling qualities that will enthral them: they will find a shining personality that will fascinate them, that will win their worshipful love — and then they

will listen to His words as they listen to the words of any philosopher, prophet, sage or seer.

To those who have so considered Him, His presence still lingers on the earth, His personality is as living, as vivid as it was twenty centuries ago.

Come! Let us for a moment contemplate Him without the mystic garments in which tradition has enwrapped Him!

Let us see Him in His captivating, adorable personality as though we had met Him this morning walking beside the glistening sea or sitting upon the flowering hillside. All the heroic figures in history that have stirred the hearts of young and old for ages pale before the ineffable brilliancy of His many-sided, all-rounded personality.

He was, indeed, heroic! He was heroic

in His utter fearlessness; He feared neither man nor the raging elements: He trembled not at the tempest upon the deep, which swept around Him, nor at the mighty men upon the earth who sought to entrap Him: He feared neither being misunderstood nor misjudged; He feared neither burdensome and difficult life nor cruel and torturing death: He walked, unflinching, in the way that was ordained.

He was heroic in the extraordinary power He gained over the excitable multitude: He could sway them by His eloquence and by the power of His truth.

But He was more heroic in the power He had over Himself to forgo His advantage. He refused to use that power with the multitude to secure His own ends. With superb self-denial, He put

aside all ambition: He chose the beauty of soul-possessions rather than the glories and principalities of the earth. The people of Jerusalem, if taken at the tide of their great ovation, would have made Him king: they were tired of Herod — of Cæsar; they wanted a leader worthy to follow; they knew that that leader was Jesus; but He turned from the ovation of palms and tributes, of spread garments and hosannas, and went with His chosen ones to an upper chamber: the joys of the spirit were far more to Him than the principalities of earth.

It is recorded that even as a Child,

"Jesus increased in *wisdom* and *stature*, and in favour with God and man."

By the time He had reached man's estate what must He have been? Consider the picture!

In the first place He lived in the open air, His face surely was exceedingly beautiful to look upon, for in the depth of His eyes He held the reflection of the light of the dawn, the miracle of the new day, the serene calm of the twilight, the lofty splendour of the stars.

The atmosphere that emanated from Him must have been dynamic, charged with all the cosmic forces of life. He was one with nature, in harmony with her! He knew her hidden treasures, the secret places of the mountain-heights, where the wonders of the universe are whispered, and the deep valleys, where the secrets of human life are revealed. The marvellous colours of the flowering land, the opalescent wonders of the sky, the miracle of blossoming and bourgeoning were a very part of Him; the murmuring music of the winds, the tinkling rivulets

and the surging sea, made rhythm for Him and throbbed in the cadence of His voice.

His life was one of virile purity, of self-restraint, of alert concentration — therefore no self-indulgence, no slothful ease, no lazy relaxation stunted His stature, coarsened His flesh, dimmed His eyes or took the keen edge from His flashingly brilliant mind: His mind had that crystalline quality, that spontaneity which is the result only of strict self-discipline and constant self-renunciation. His mind had all the rapier-like keen cleverness of which moderns boast, but the casual reader fails to note the sharpness of that fine wit because it was so delicately veiled by subtlety, and tempered by wit to hide the wit. It was impossible for the wily Jews to entrap Him or to ensnare Him.

There must have been about Him, also, an intense magnetism, an arousing life-giving quality which brought men hope at the mere sight of Him, for we hear them cry as He passed —

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

There are a few persons in the world who have this atmosphere in some degree: they are those who have subdued the flesh — who have put the Ego and all personal desires under foot: those are the persons whom we want near us in the hours of need.

Jesus had this quality, this atmosphere, in the maximum degree, and the result was that He held and compelled every one whom He met. There was a reserve of measureless power within Him, emanating from Him. The multitudes

followed Him and hung upon His words; the sick arose and walked, made strong by the psychic strength that came from Him; the hardened old money-changers fell back before Him and left their tables where they sold their goods, trafficking on the superstition of the people. The self-righteous Pharisees at a glance from His penetrating eyes broke down abashed at their own self-revelation.

There was a fearless frankness, a straightforward directness, a translucid candour about Him that was intellectually stimulating.

And yet with all this fearless frankness there was a divine charity that stirs the soul: He told men the truth about themselves freely, without disguise or softening, but He never had personal animosity for any personal injury. He knew when men were liars and He called

them, without hesitation and without reserve, "whited sepulchres," "full of dead men's bones," but He had no personal resentment, none, even when they perverted and distorted His words, turning them away from their meaning, and tried in every way to trap Him. And when, at last, they put Him to death, with all the magnitude of His mighty heart He asked God to forgive them.

Although He had the lofty majesty that compelled the money-changers and the self-satisfied Pharisees, yet there was combined with that a bewitching tenderness, a fascinating winning smile.

How do we know? Ask the little children of Judæa!

After the lapse of the centuries those trusting little children, running to His outstretched arms, give testimony to the fact.

The children insisted upon going to Him, and when His disciples tried to safeguard Him from what they thought an intrusion, He would not have them kept away.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," He said, as He gathered them into His arms.

This is conclusive. Children never desire to go to a severe, gloomy, or solemn man; they shrink from "a man of sorrows;" they do not even wish to go to one who is colourless and negative.

Children *know!* — and Jesus knew children!

The quick kinship that Jesus had for children, His comprehension of them, of their play — their laughing and their piping and their dancing — is a sure proof of the child-like quality, the spar-

kling freshness of life that He ever kept in His own heart.

And then there was His incomparable, never-failing courtesy, which gives the flash of another facet of His many-sidedness. He was gracious, considerate, chivalrous — to the mighty and to the lowly, to the ruler and to the outcast, to the nobleman and to the peasant, to the churchman and to the malefactor.

His courtesy was never-failing because it was comprehending: that is the essence of grace. Men are rude and ruthless because they do not understand; they will not take the trouble to consider, to understand.

Jesus understood; and with complete graciousness He put every one at ease, even the outcasts. Whatever the sorrow, whatever the sin, whatever the difficulty — when a sincere person approached

Jesus, it was like going home: he met an exquisite consideration, a generous response, a perfect comprehension of all his difficulties.

Apart from all things churchly or theological, Jesus, as He walked the earth, shines forth as the most compelling, satisfying presence in all history, in all story, in all the sagas of the world.

And He has said that all men may be even as He was and this is the message, the evangel, He taught the world. Hearken to His words:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

It is unthinkable that Jesus, the spirit of truth, would have said this unless He knew that it were possible.

He knew that every man may be himself *plus* the Eternal.

But to attain this power man must of necessity learn to see with his eyes and hear with his ears: it is a matter of cultivation, of training, of study, but there *must be* the training and the study to gain the result. In the physical realm the senses become atrophied from lack of use. A man has to educate them to quick perception to be enabled to really know the full beauty that lies on every side: and, likewise, if he has neglected to see with his spiritual vision, to hear with his spiritual perception, if he has eyes and sees not, ears and hears not, it takes training, discipline and cultivation to be able to really see, to really perceive.

It is a difficult task to accomplish, but it is possible, it is attainable. In the

universe, just behind the veil of the material world, there are great and potent forces — forces that can work miracles: one need only believe in them, reach out for them, be in tune and harmony with them, to be in the centre of a vast dynamic force, a great creative power, which will give one a new and vibrant life.

Joy, exaltation, calmness, serenity, fearlessness, are the portion of the soul that has found this dynamic force, this creative power.

Jesus knew the unseen forces of the universe and, being one with God, the Infinite Source of them all, He was one with the creative Spirit.

He proclaimed in His Word — "I and my Father are one."

This *at-one-ment* with the everlasting Source of all good, of all life, is the supreme

secret of life and it is to be found by every son of the Most High.

What Jesus said man may say. Man may, if he will, be in harmony with the eternal ever-living Centre and Source of power, force and creative energy and, being in harmony with the Source, the agencies of that power, the dynamic forces in the universe around him are at his command.

There is nothing that may not be accomplished if a man work with those dynamic forces: his soul will find strength to bear whatever comes and his mind will find ways to change the world.

But one must believe in a power to utilise it, to possess it: that is the simple law of common-sense in the material world.

There is a similar law of common-sense in the spiritual realm. Unseen forces —

cosmic, powerful, spiritual — lie hidden everywhere in the universe: if a man believes in them, he finds them, and if he finds them, he has found the key that can unlock the secrets and the strongholds of the universe.

This spiritual possession is the only possession that is inviolable, incorruptible, imperishable, eternal.

This power will enable man to accomplish the only betterment that will endure.

And if a man gain this, he is panoplied to meet whatever may befall — he is forever invincible, he is master and lord over himself and over all the circumstances of life.

No outward thing made the slightest difference to Jesus: poverty, suffering, pain, ignominy, injustice, cruelty, did

not touch His perfect poise; He was the same under all outward circumstances; the same lofty, love-compelling, worshipful, serene spirit moving in the same high altitude; whether it was in the radiant sunshine of life or in the dark and ghastly shadow of death.

He rode smiling through the sparkling, gay Jerusalem, amidst the waving of palms and the acclaim of the multitude; He heard the eager shouts of loud hosannas, and in His heart He knew that they would crown Him king.

He walked, blood-stained, bearing His bitter cross, through the great gate in the relentless wall that stood around Jerusalem, amidst the loud jeers and sneers of the multitude; He heard the cruel cry "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

and in His heart He knew that He was to die as a malefactor.

And yet, in each event, He was the same — unmoved, unchanged, untouched by the outward condition: the same dignity, the same reality, the same majesty enwrapped Him; the same purpose and consecration possessed Him; the same love emanated from Him.

The palm-crowned king — the thorn-crowned malefactor!

And no one marked a difference in the bearing of the man.

When a man has reached this supremacy over all outward circumstance, then has he reached the highest point of attainment, of culture, of possession — whether he be mighty or lowly, rich or poor, prince or pauper, ill or well, lonely or happy, defamed or honoured. To have a spirit

which is serene in its altitude, which walks unmoved, undisturbed, untouched by any suffering, which is at one with God, — *that* is the highest Good.

If a man gain this his individual life will be forever changed, and as a result he will change the life about him — its evils, its conditions for his fellow-men: it is inevitable.

The Golden Rule will be his rule of life, and betterment for the world will emanate from him even as flowers and fruit open from the sunshine. To give one's all, even one's life, as Jesus did for the betterment of the world, will be the desire of the heart.

But the true betterment will *not* come by the waving of red flags and the blowing of brazen trumpets, not by shouting upon the housetops: it will not be brought about by advertised

propaganda, with the tinkling cymbals and sounding brass of observation.

True betterment will come as the consummate fruit of the Spirit.

When it comes, it will be impossible for any class to show hatred and malice, to feel hatred and malice toward another class whilst preaching reformation, however wrong that other class may be.

This key to the unseen kingdom of the soul is the thing to be striven for: the way to find this key is the supreme and glad Evangel of Jesus. And the present generation of blind guides are turning men's attention away from it and are proclaiming aloud the lesser kingdoms of Observation by their assertions — "Lo here, lo there, is the way the Master intended men to build up His kingdom."

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And what shall it profit humanity if it gain a correct system, a more just equilibrium of social order, and if the *soul* of humanity, the inward spiritual Vision, are lost meanwhile?

O that the world might rise above the stress and turmoil, above the strain and the pain, above all the raging warfare of life, and reach the altitude of the soul which Jesus knew!

O that poverty, injustice and outward circumstance of life might matter as little to every man as they mattered to Jesus; that the tragedy of his fate — *whatever it be* — might daunt every man as little as the tragedy of the Cross daunted Jesus.

THE MIGHTY AND THE LOWLY

In all the dramas of the world there is no more soul-stirring scene than that scene in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The sombre shadows of the Judæan night enwrap the garden. Jesus is alone. He is spent and worn, for He has been passing through a conflict of soul — it is this passing conflict which proves His sensitive spirit and bravely illustrates the power of His conquest: had He not felt the magnitude of the tragedy, the triumph of His poise would not have proved what it did prove.

His disciples lie in the distance asleep amidst the sleeping flowers: they are unconscious of the quality of that great soul beside which they have lived.

Jesus looks up into the cosmic spaces of the starry heavens, drawing, as is His wont, the infinite forces of the universe

from the Infinite Power beyond the stars.

Suddenly, upon the silence of the night, there is heard the clank and clang of armed feet, the clashing of swords and staves, and there flashes in the darkness the swift moving of lurid lights — Roman lanterns and flaming torches.

Jesus looks upon the approaching throng and knows that His hour has come!

The measure of His sensitive nature, finely attuned to harmony, jarred by all discord, is the measure of His pain: the measure of His titanic soul is the measure of the on-rush of prophetic agony.

He foresees it all — the betrayal by one He loves, the cruel capture, the ruthless binding of His proud person, the bitter injustice which will give Him

no hearing, the mock trial which will grant Him no defence, the ignominy, the persecution, the malefactor's death.

But He does not shrink nor falter.

Out from the shadow of the olive trees He steps into the baneful glare of the relentless torches:

"Whom seek ye?" He asks.

For a space the mass of merciless murderers are confounded before the majestic presence of the man, the music of His voice, the lofty dignity of His bearing: He seems to wear an invisible crown beside which the imperial diadem of Cæsar is as a worthless bauble.

Surely, this is some stranger who will help them to find the one they seek — the one who hides in terror from their implacable hate, the relentless purpose of their vengence.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they answer.

History shows no more sublime picture than that valiant figure, serene, dauntless, undismayed, without one stain of fear, standing before that seething throng of murderers with consuming hatred in their eyes — the implacable hatred which possesses men who have been told the truth about themselves: Jesus sees the hatred in their eyes, He sees their swords and staves; beyond — He sees the pitiless path to Golgotha, the bitter cross, and He answers:

"I am He."

Then He goes forth to die.

The way He walks is stained with the blood that flows from the stripes which wanton men have laid upon His precious body. Upon His head there is the cruel crown of thorns — the mockery of its

taunt sharper than the long points of the savage thorns; upon His shoulders He bears the burden of His heavy cross: but on His lips there is a compassionate prayer for those who lead Him on to death.

Across the chasm of the centuries, through the dark mists of history, we see Him hanging on the cross upon the hill of Golgotha.

The anguish of pierced flesh wracks His quivering nerves, the hot flush of fever consumes His burning frame, the sneers and jeers of the brutal rabble cut deep into His heart.

And yet, above it all, behold! He shines serene, calm, triumphant, beautiful.

No outward crucifixion can touch His soul.

Through the deafening din of the centuries, through the rolling echoes of history, we hear His final words which teach us how to die — and how to live:

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

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